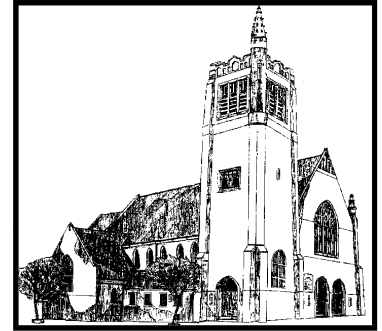




# Newsletter of St. George's URC Hartlepool April-May 2020



Dear Friends

Well we find ourselves in strange times! Nobody could have predicted that we would have to cancel the Knitted bible exhibition, concerts and finally close up our churches. As minister and members, we enter a new way of being church together and I hope you are all receiving our worship either via the internet or through the post. If you haven't received it and would like to please give me a ring or drop me and email and I will add you to the list.

I am currently reading a book called Sabbath by Nicola Slee. It was supposed to be in preparation for my Sabbatical next year – a time to reflect on what having 'time out', not 'time off' means. Little did I think that a lot of it would become so relevant already. Throughout the book the reader is invited to enter into a period of reflection, a time to rethink relationship with God and to seek a deeper understanding of the God who loves us unconditionally.

Finding ourselves in a period of working and living differently throws up many challenges. It is a good opportunity for us to take stock and to refresh ourselves spiritually and emotionally. It is also the opposite of that for some people. You might find connecting with God and your own emotions difficult as we live in isolation from those we love. However you are feeling, please do not think you are alone. St George's has always prided itself on being a family, so pick up the phone and say hello because whoever you ring might just need to hear your voice and much as you need to hear theirs. And I am available to you all whenever you need a prayer or a chat.

There are so many bible passages that can support us through these days, and I am sure many of you have your favourite passages that you turn to. It would be good to share these with one another.

Often, I turn to Psalm 139 and the assurance that God knows me inside out and loves me even with that deep knowledge of the sort of person I am. To be known so intimately is a source for hope in all things. In my on-line bible the Psalm is headed 'The Inescapable God'. I can't imagine wanting to escape all that love and care any time, but especially in these uncertain times.

As we approach Easter we do so with the sure and certain knowledge of the resurrection of Jesus. Today it feels like we are caught up in the waiting of Easter Saturday – that time of uncertainty and despair, of deep sadness and a longing for better times. We will not be able to celebrate Easter in our Churches this year but in our homes and in our hearts we can remember with hope the joy of resurrection and pray, Lord, your Kingdom come, as we tuck into our Easter Eggs.

God bless you!

With love

Sue



**This space is usually for all the rotas. Strange, but liberating not to have them. Over to the church secretary.**

### **Newsletter/Sheet April and May 2020**

As I sit trying to think what to say under these very strange circumstances, I think I need to start by expressing the sadness I'm sure you all feel, that we have had to close the church due to the Coronavirus/COVID-19 pandemic.

### **Knitted Bible**

Of course this has meant we have had to cancel the visit home of the Knitted Bible and all the associated events we had planned. This event had taken a lot of organising and I'd like to thank those involved for their hard work. Kathryn has had many other churches contacting her to cancel as well. I will hopefully be possible for us to rebook later this year in one of the spots that have been cancelled – assuming that things return to normal relatively soon. Failing that it looks as if it will be 2022 or before it will be able to come home.

### **Buddy System**

One of the most important things during this time is to make sure that we do not lose touch with one another. To help us maintain contact, and try and ensure that nobody inadvertently gets forgotten, we have set up a Buddy System. This involves people being paired together with the intention that they contact each other by what every method they prefer, at least once a week for a chat, and to check that they are both alright. Should there be a problem, or if either party need any help then if they are unable to solve it themselves the Minister, Church Secretary and other Elders are also available and ready to help when needed.

Everybody should have by now received details of their Buddy and who they are Buddy for. If you have not had this information please contact Margaret H and she will let you have them.

This system does not mean that you can't contact anybody else. Please feel free to contact as many of the church family as you like, as often as you like. The more we keep in touch with each other the better.

### **Services**

We should express our thanks to Rev Sue for preparing a service for us each Sunday while we are unable to worship together. I'm sure this is very time consuming and we are all very grateful.

As most of you probably know, the URC produces Daily Devotions which are sent out by email. They are now also producing Sunday services by the same method. If you would like to have the details of how to sign up for these please contact Margaret H.

Margaret Humberston



The total for our “water Aid” project stands at £31.53. Thank you to everyone who is supporting and please keep saving your coppers etc. When we can be together again, I will gladly collect them

Keep safe

Wyn Parkinson

### Shoeboxes.

It is looking unlikely at this moment that we will be enjoying packing up boxes in October but we can live in hope. We have lots of articles but a sad loss of boxes. So if folks are doing a sort out whilst at home and find any shoeboxes please save them until the church is reopened.

Many Thanks

Aileen.



### From the editor

Well, this is a time for “firsts”. It’s probably the first time that churches have been closed en masse for centuries. The only time I can think of is when the whole country was excommunicated in the reign of King John, when as “1066 and All That” says “nobody was allowed to be born, married or be buried except in church porches”. ( a book I recommend for an irreverent look at history)

This is the first time the Newsletter has been email only and I’m sorry that we can’t have print copies. If you are feeling kind, you could always print a copy off for your “buddy”.

Thank you to Margaret for her hard work in working out the “buddy” list– the only list here except the regular activities on the back page. They will start again one day. As will services. Thanks to Sue for her production of services to keep us together. Did you know the URC are producing services for Sunday’s? Today’s was by Rev Phil Nevard who many of you will remember as our last minister of the 20th century. I put that in to make him feel old, though he was brand new when he came to us.

What are you doing with yourselves? “What did you do in the pandemic, Daddy?” to misquote the famous First World War poster. I am following one from the Second War “Don’t panic and...” In my case it’s making jam. I had a great store of black currants in the freezer which have now been transformed into Jelly. About 20 jars!

I know many of the hobbies club are knitting like fury– Rose has run out of wool! Sailors and shoe boxes will not be short of hats or scarves this year. We’ll do a round up of what people have got up to in the next Newsletter.

It occurs to me– would you like a monthly one while we’re in lockdown? Yes it probably will last that long.

We shall miss lots of celebrations during this time, not least of all, **Robert and Sheila Harrison’s Golden Wedding on May 23rd.** Hope you will be able to do something special.

Happy birthday to all those who will have them soon. We hope that it won’t be too long before virtual hugs can be replaced by real ones

Love Chris

And here’s something to show that hope never dies/



Dear sisters and brothers in Christ,

Sometimes life catches us unprepared for what is to follow: when the landscape remains the same, yet things feel very different. Such unpredictability is daunting when we feel we cannot alter the situation and see uncharted waters ahead.

Although a global pandemic is such a moment, we do have agency: we can adapt our behaviour for the common good through social distancing and self-isolation. We can look out for one another, even when not meeting face to face. Our worship and prayer lives continue unhindered within our homes, just like the earliest Christian communities. We are blessed with a postal service, telephones, mobiles, iPads, and computers, which on a moment by moment basis hold us in a web of love and care even when separated from loved ones and friends. Ceasing to meet as a Christian Fellowship is an important means of contributing to a safer community, protecting those who are most vulnerable.

Coronavirus is reminding us, sensitising us, to how our lives in a globalised world are so intimately connected: Only good can come from such a realisation of interconnectedness – as Paul wrote of the Church: ‘God has so composed the body ... that there may be no division in the body, but that the members may have the same care for one another. If one member suffers, all suffer together; if one member is honoured, all rejoice together.’ (1 Corinthians 12 : 24 – 26).

I write to you as sisters and brothers in the faith., when we feel our anxiety levels rising, recall the many times we read the words ‘Do not be afraid!’ throughout the Bible – a constant message, reminding us of God’s sovereignty, whose presence fills everywhere: past, present, and times to come, whose infinite love underpins all. There is so much in Scripture that brings us guidance in such times.

May God’s hand be guiding virologists, frontline health care workers, and all who continue to serve the common good with a selflessness and unconditional generosity which is inspiring, and can be honoured and undergirded through our prayers and our changing our behaviour as much as we can to help them to help those who are poorly.

Writing of prayers, you can join the whole Church in prayer each day at 7pm (set an alarm now, to remind you), no videoconferencing or web-streaming or wi-fi required - just open hearts and minds as we commend one another, our neighbours and communities to God’s love. May our prayers inspire acts of kindness. As St David said in the 6<sup>th</sup> Century: ‘do the little things’; this we can do. I invite you to share in a prayer from the General Secretary of the United Reformed Church, the Revd John Proctor:

Lord Jesus,  
In the midst of a storm,  
You said, ‘Peace be still.’  
Bid our anxious fears subside,  
Sustain your church in faith, hope and love,  
Bring our nation through this tumult,  
Grant wisdom to those with heavy responsibilities,  
And healing and hope to those who are infected.

Amen

As ever, and in Christ,  
Revd David Herbert  
Northern Synod Moderator

27 March 2020

**A message to all who are the United Reformed Church from Derek Estill and Nigel Uden  
Moderators of the General Assembly**

Amid this Covid-19 shaped world, we greet you in the name of God –  
by whose grace we were created,  
by whose mercy and love we are sustained,  
by whose love we will be held forever.

Even as we are moderators of the General Assembly, so we are immersed in local churches, and it is as your companions on the Way that we wished to write to you this weekend. Our experiences mirror yours – we, too, are distancing ourselves physically from others, we too are feeling uncertain, sometimes even fearful.

Coronavirus Covid-19 has been creeping up on us. We watched its effect upon other countries and washed our hands as we sang ‘Happy birthday’. Now it is affecting us, and last Sunday Nicola Sturgeon, Scotland’s First Minister, punctured any complacency there may have been, saying, “life should not feel normal”,

and if it does, you should ask if you are doing the "right things". It's a new world, and we don't always feel so brave.

How should we react? There have been essential things to do. Far from having less on our agenda, many of us have been burning the candle at both ends. And there was no alternative; stuff was happening, and we needed to deal with it. But it seems Covid-19 will shape our lives for some time to come. In the coming weeks it will be good if we can regain a balance between activity and reflection, for few of us can thrive on the freneticism and angst that has suddenly overtaken us. It has been said that a person best deals with a new situation not by hitting the ground running, but by hitting the ground kneeling. The place of prayer in this coronavirus situation, we would suggest, is vital. Prayer can maintain our own equilibrium, as it opens us to the peace and grace of God. We will also surely want to intercede in prayer, holding before God people who are unwell or bereaved, people who are giving their all to bring us through the pandemic, and people whose all has been taken from them through the death of a loved one, the loss of a job, of a business or of mental health. And then there is the need for prayer with those in countries that have neither the finances nor the health service of ours. The call to pray last Sunday evening at 7.00pm, placing a candle in a street-facing window, was moving. May we commend that to you as a weekly observance? Even when we are feeling frustrated that we cannot do much to help, we can all pray, and there is something strengthening when we do so together, simultaneously.

Part of what is carrying us through is the devoted and tireless leadership of many people. We are more grateful than we can say for our General Secretariat and all their colleagues at Church House, for the Officers of the Assembly, for our committees, for our Synod Moderators and all who work with them in those thirteen councils of the church. And we are mindful of all those who are leading the responses of local churches. We hear of ministers and elders, members and friends who have strained every sinew to arrange pastoral care, to make it possible for us to worship in our homes, and to be part of our neighbourhoods' reaching out to people in need. Other than mixing 'from' and 'form', one of Nigel's most frequent typos is to press the *w* and the *e* at the same time when starting the word elders. Yet how right that is; welding joins two pieces of metal so that they become one, and so that they withstand the forces to which they may be subjected. Many people are welders in every sphere of the church, as well as in every layer of government, and in society at large. For each sense in which we are being held together, we give thanks for welders.

Who knows where this will lead us? Quite probably, not to exactly where it found us. Society will be different; we will each be different; and the church will be different. In 1949, R. W. Hugh-Jones was called to be the minister of Warwick Road Congregational Church in Coventry. The city remained devastated after the blitz of November 1940. It needed rebuilding, renewing. Something different was being asked of the church, too. Years later, Hugh-Jones recalled that he had been persuaded to accept the call when a deacon said to him, 'there is nothing in this church that cannot be changed as long as the Gospel is preached, and the Kingdom of God extended.' Even if we might use slightly different words, pondering what rebuilding and renewing the future will require, maybe what that deacon said could speak to us, even for us all.

And what of God? Sam Wells, Vicar of London's St Martin-in-the-Fields, speaks of God being 'for', and being 'with'. Wells under values neither, but observes that in the Jesus narratives, God's work *for* is focussed on a brief moment in Jerusalem, 1% of his life, whereas Jesus is faithfully *with* us far more, 90% in Nazareth, 9% in Galilee. Is that not a central conviction of the Bible? Hebrew and Christian writings alike have God with us, a light to accompany us through the shadows. Given we appear to be in this crisis for the long haul, if we're walking the way and living the life of Jesus today there will be things we can do *for* each other and be they great or small they will matter significantly. But we must never underestimate the value of being *with* each other. Consistently and reliably, thoughtfully and sensitively with each other, and with God because God is always with us.

In our prayers, unto God's gracious mercy and protection we commit you.

Yours sincerely, in Christ,

Nigel Uden and Derek Estill







*Where to from here? Well as you would expect most of the future events have been cancelled or postponed. The Knitted Bible has become a casualty of the Coronavirus and when it will return to St George's to be displayed here is still to be decided. The 2 new scenes that are to be added to the exhibition are progressing well, it's just a shame that we cannot have an official unveiling in Hartlepool.*

*Paul Kerensa has been cancelled but will be rearranged for later in the year. At the moment, The Royal Northern Sinfonia is still scheduled for the 23 May but is unlikely to take place, Dave and Sally may also be postponed as their whole tour is likely to be cancelled thereby making a trip to Hartlepool uneconomical. We shall have to see but will keep you informed. Future events are being planned but the virus is making arrangements difficult.*

*I hope to see you all in the sunshine when the dark clouds have passed,*

*Love and blessings, may God bless you all.*

*Thank you for your on-going support.*

St George's presents  
An evening with ...

# PAUL KERENSA

Stand up comedy from a writer for BBC1's Miranda, Not Going Out, Top Gear & a pause for thought on Radio 2 among countless others.  
"Top comic, top writer, top bloke" - Lee Mack

Thursday  
30th April at 7.30  
Park Road,  
Hartlepool TS26 9HP

Tickets £10.00  
Paul: 07971 572072

LINE TICKETS FROM BROWN PAPER TICKETS.CO.UK

St George's presents ... In association with the Hartlepool Music Society

# Royal Northern Sinfonia

Saturday, May 23rd  
7.30 prompt  
St George's Park Road Hartlepool  
TS26 9HP

Tickets £10.00

Contact [www.brownpapertickets.co.uk](http://www.brownpapertickets.co.uk)

St George's presents

# Dave Bainbridge & Sally Minnear

Iona, Lifesigns, Celestial Fire, Strawbs  
Lord of the Dance

An Evening of Iona Music and More ...  
Thursday 11th June 2020  
Park Road, Hartlepool TS26 9HP  
8.00

"Dave and Sally were simply amazing at The Mega Centre (Rayleigh) last night I would recommend anyone who gets a chance to catch them playing live." Steven

Advance Tickets £12.50 £14.00 at the door

Contact [www.brownpapertickets.co.uk](http://www.brownpapertickets.co.uk)



*The family and friends of Brian Fisher had supplied most of the raffle prizes and thanks to the St George's ladies we had a very successful raffle which contributed to the overall total.*

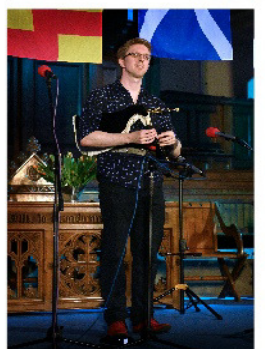
*The second half opened with Sylviane and George on the Flemish and French pipes. These blend together very well and were played with much skill. Tony Wilson followed, as only Tony can, with skillful mandola, humour and self penned songs. Andy May completed the line up for the evening with his amazing skills on the Northumbrian pipes. Andy is an extremely talented piper who turns his hands to making pipes as well. He also plays the Irish pipes but admits that they don't sound the same as when Catherine plays them. Andy played for around 45 minutes and the concert closed at 10.15 as we had planned.*

*The whole event was held together by Joy Rennie, half of DogWatch, as John was a little under the weather and felt that he would have been ill advised to co-compere the evening as many of the audience were quite apprehensive regarding the Covid-19 virus and rightly so.*

*It was a very friendly event, everyone chatted and got on well together. Amateur and professional pipers mingled together very well. There was no one-upmanship between the artists and everyone left with a big smile on their faces.*

*Thank you to the church members who stayed around to help tidy up it always makes things easier. Thanks to those making refreshments, The pot washers, the raffle ladies, those on the door, Thomas on the PA and to everyone else for coming along.*

*Paul*







# A Night for Brian

Dear all,

14<sup>th</sup> March 2020

*It was a great concert. £1000 was raised in total with £700 going towards the Patient Handling facilities at James Cook University Hospital (Ward 24). Under the circumstances, around 75-80 people were in the audience.*

*I have to say I was nervous all day on Friday as events were being cancelled or postponed. I didn't want to put anyone at risk so I had to be so careful that going ahead was the right thing to do. We arranged with the performing artists that we would meet together at 4.30 to 5 o'clock for a sound check and for some final arrangements and a bite to eat. A few were busy during the day and had contacted me to say they would arrive at around 7.00. Not perfect, but at least they were coming. A last minute email from Andy May informed me that he didn't drive and was coming from Newcastle created a little panic but thanks to Tony Wilson transport was arranged. Catherine Ashcroft travelled from Clitheroe in Lancashire to perform on the evening and this was greatly appreciated as she added a different dimension with her uilleann pipes.*

*John Frater, the 6 foot 7 giant on the Scottish pipes opened the concert in great style by marching to the front of the church. He was followed by the Cleveland Pipers who lost a valued member when Brian died last year. They performed with great clarity and skill albeit a tad quieter after the Scottish opening. Catherine Ashcroft followed on the Irish pipes to the sheer amazement of the audience. Irish pipes are deceptive as they pack a real punch when played well. Catherine is a well respected and internationally known piper of very high standard and she amply demonstrated that on the evening.*





## Keep Calm and Pom-Pom!

Following all the recent changes to what we can do and where we can go, we may be stay at home folks for a while, if so, can you help me with a autumn project? Yes, I did say autumn- we need to be positive and think practical here so let's plan for happier times!

Can you – make pompoms? Any colour, and thickness of wool and any size. Please make as many as you would like to.

Let's turn our frowns of unease into smiles of joy! And go pom-pom!.The pom poms will be used at Synod and shared with all churches – why a pom-pom?

Well firstly they are easy to make, can be put down and picked up without the need of a pattern etc. A craft all ages can do alone or even better together, as families, where possible. I hope children may engage in this activity as part of their break from school. Pom-poms will come in all shapes and sizes just like us, they will be different textures and colours just like us, wrinkles and all (I speak for myself here) and yet they are woven together to make a something beautiful. Just as God has moulded us to be his hands and feet on earth. Pom-Poms are round and help us reflect upon the world that God has entrusted to us.

We can use our creative minds to produce a pom-pom as a gift for one another. As we make them, we can pray and think about all our friends at this challenging time.

A time of uncertainty, change, where all that has been familiar in our church lives has been changed and yet just as with the wool, the stands of faith remain sure and steadfast. We can continue to pray, and care for those we know within our church communities and the greater world via differing methods of communication, at this time.

May our pom-pom making give us a sense of purpose and achievement, that even from the confines of our homes we can minister to one another, shaping a gift of love to pass around our churches, showing that even in the darkest of times we can bring forth the light of Christian fellowship.

The following Bible passage helps reflect upon the task you may wish to participate in, and you may find Paul's words, appropriate to our current situation at this time when there are a lot of rumours surrounding the facts to date, let our faith be our guide and God's blessing and assurance guide us all.

- 2** I want you woven into a tapestry of love, in touch with everything there is to know of God. Then you will have minds confident and at rest, focused on Christ, God's great mystery.
- 3** All the richest treasures of wisdom and knowledge are embedded in that mystery and nowhere else. And we've been shown the mystery!
- 4** I'm telling you this because I don't want anyone leading you off on some wild-goose chase, after other so-called mysteries, or "the Secret."
- 5** I'm a long way off, true, and you may never lay eyes on me, but believe me, I'm on your side, right beside you. I am delighted to hear of the careful and orderly ways you conduct your affairs, and impressed with the solid substance of your faith in Christ.
- 6** My counsel for you is simple and straightforward: Just go ahead with what you've been given. You received Christ Jesus, the Master; now live him.
- 7** You're deeply rooted in him. You're well constructed upon him. You know your way around the

need a telescope, a microscope, or a horoscope to realize the fullness of Christ, and the emptiness of the universe without him.

**10** When you come to him, that fullness comes together for you, too. His power extends over everything.

**11** Entering into this fullness is not something you figure out or achieve. It's not a matter of being circumcised or keeping a long list of laws. No, you're already in - insiders - not through some secretive initiation rite but rather through what Christ has already gone through for you, destroying the power of sin.

**12** If it's an initiation ritual you're after, you've already been through it by submitting to baptism. Going under the water was a burial of your old life; coming up out of it was a resurrection, God raising you from the dead as he did Christ.

Email: [hannah.middleton@urc-northernsynod.org](mailto:hannah.middleton@urc-northernsynod.org)

**Thanks Hannah x**



The next date for the newsletter would normally be 31st May– Pentecost, but I think we'll play it by ear

#### **St George's Regular Activities**

Sun	10.30am	Family Worship
Mon	2.00pm	Monday Meeting at Grange Road
	6.00pm	Beavers
	6.30pm	Cub Scouts
	7.0pm	Scouts
3rd Tuesday	in month Prayer meeting 11.00am	
Thur	10am	Hobbies Club

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#### **CHURCH TREASURER**

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